

But we are willing to spend it, because we understand that if you can't read, the science programs don't matter, it's hard to excel in math. Reading is the gateway to knowledge. Reading is the true civil right of the 21st century, as far as I'm concerned.

And we're proposing more money for Title I students as well. We're going to ask for the '04 budget a billion-dollar increase, up to \$12.3 billion for Title I students, because one of the goals in this Nation has got to be to close the achievement gap.

That starts with having high expectations. You see, I want to repeat what I said earlier: I believe that too many of the adults figure certain children cannot learn. And they just say, "Heck, let's just move them through." So we not only need to make sure the money is there, but we've got to make sure the attitude changes. And the accountability systems within the No Child Left Behind Act insist that we have an attitude change in America. That's what this says.

One year ago, we met the first challenge of education reform. We passed the law. And now we've got another challenge, and that's the implementation of this law. Today we honor five States; there are 45 more to go. Some of the education leaders of those States are here. We look forward to seeing your plans. We look forward to seeing the spirit of the No Child Left Behind law in your plans. We look forward to strong accountability systems. We look forward to seeing the implementation of curricula that works. We look forward to the hiring of principals who know how to lead a school. We look forward to rewarding teachers who are not only lending their hearts but their talents, to make sure no child gets left behind. We look forward to a culture in America that understands every child can learn. And we look forward to the day that no child in this country is ever left behind.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:46 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Keith Owen, principal, Beulah Heights Elementary School in Pueblo, CO; and G. Reid Lyon, chief, Child Development and Behavior Branch, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health. He also referred to the Individuals with

Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Public Law No. 91-230); and Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law No. 103-382), which amended Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law No. 89-10).

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders

January 8, 2003

The President. Thank you all for coming today. I'm going to have a statement, and then we'll ask you to leave so we can get down to our business.

I want to welcome Members of the Senate and the House, both Republicans and Democrats, for this, the first of many meetings we'll have this year to figure out how we can work together and get some things done on behalf of the American people.

Yesterday and today the Senate and the House acted on behalf of the unemployed workers of America. I have the extension of unemployment benefits in front of me. I want to congratulate Senators Frist and Daschle and Speaker Hastert and Leader Pelosi for the good work on behalf of the American workers.

And right now it is my honor to sign this piece of legislation, which should bring some comfort to those of our fellow citizens who need extra help during the time in which they try to find a job. So congratulations for a good job, and it's my honor to sign the bill.

[At this point, the President signed the bill.]

The President. I signed this, and I intend to sign a lot of other bills this year. And I know the only reason I'll be able to do so is because we're going to work together. We owe that to the American people. It's the spirit that now prevails in this room. And I look forward to working with Members of both parties to get a lot done to make America a safer place, a stronger place, and a better place.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:08 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. S. 23, approved January 8, was assigned Public Law No.

108–1. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at the National Capital Flag Company in Alexandria, Virginia

January 9, 2003

Thanks for having me, Al. First, we just had a really good discussion about how to make sure America is as promising as possible, how do we grow our economy, what's the role of Government, who do we trust when it comes to the people's money. And I want to thank Al for assembling the group and providing this opportunity for me to come and speak to you all and to the country about America.

First, the great thing about America, it's represented by guys like Al. He owns his own business. It's his. He's realizing his dream. The true strength of America is the entrepreneurial spirit of America, is the fact that Al, who had gone from firefighter to CEO—it can happen—and not only CEO, but CEO of a thriving business. And I know Al's wife and daughter are really proud of him for taking a risk.

But by taking risk, he is not only realizing a dream, he's also helping other people find work. The backbone of the U.S. economy is the small business. And to be able to talk about economic vitality and growth in a small business is a joy for me.

So thanks for having me. Thanks for what you do. Thanks for making all those flags that fly on the limousines. *[Laughter]* I'm proud to be traveling behind your flag. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank Hector Barreto, who is the Administrator of the Small Business Administration, for being with us.

I'm proud that our Senator from the State of Virginia is with us, George Allen. I'm honored George is here. He's a good fellow. If you've got any complaints about things, just take them to George. *[Laughter]* But I'm proud to call him friend.

I want to thank the vice mayor of Alexandria who's here. Where are you? Thank you, sir. Mr. Mayor, thanks for coming. I'm honored you're here. My little brother is a resident of Alexandria, so go light on his property

taxes. *[Laughter]* I'm going to try to go light on his income taxes. *[Laughter]*

I appreciate so very much the folks that joined us to talk about their own individual circumstances and the policies that I've articulated. I am oftentimes asked, "How is the economy doing?" And it's doing pretty darn well, given the fact that we've been through a recession, which is three quarters of negative growth. We've been through an attack on America, which many folks in this neighborhood, obviously, witnessed the consequences of firsthand. That caused our economy to slow down. It caused people not to get on airplanes and go to hotels. It was a shock to our economy. And then we had some of our citizens not tell the truth, that they thought that they could fudge the numbers to get ahead. And that created a lack of confidence. And we've dealt with all three of these things, and our economy is growing.

In spite of the fact that we had three major effects, the economy is showing positive growth. Matter of fact, we're the strongest, most resilient economy in the entire world, which should say something. So we're pretty darn good, but we're not good enough. And that's what I'm concerned about.

I say we're not good enough because there are some in the corporate world that don't have the confidence to expand like they should be expanding, and too many of our citizens are looking for work. Too many people who want to work can't find a job, and that concerns me. And so one of my jobs is to deal with problems. If you see a problem, instead of hoping it goes away, just be forthright and lay out a plan to deal with it. And that's what I'm doing. That's what I did in Chicago, and that's what I'm going to do again today, to talk about why I've—why I said what I think is important.

First, in order to deal with the recession, in June of 2001, I signed a law that allowed people to keep more of their own money. In other words, it was tax relief for all citizens. We've reduced the tax rates for everybody who pays taxes. And it was phased in over a period of years for the sake of economic vitality. I mean, it was good enough in January of '01, the theory that if you let people have more of their own money, it